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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000074

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/OHI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2019
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [OSCE](#) [KDEM](#) [LH](#)
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT REPEATEDLY FAILS TO CONDEMN
ANTI-SEMITIC VANDALISM

REF: A. 08VILNIUS472
[B](#). 08VILNIUS655

Classified By: Ambassador John A. Cloud for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Anti-Semitic vandalism still occurs frequently in Lithuania without drawing public condemnation from the GOL despite its responsibility to do so as an OSCE member state. Lithuania is scheduled to take the OSCE chair in 2011. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) In January 2009 alone, at least four incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism were reported in towns across Lithuania, with no reaction from the government. Anti-Semitic (as well as anarchist and anti-Christian) graffiti were painted on a Catholic church in Vilnius on January 16. Swastikas and "Kill Jews" were scrawled on the Jewish community building in Klaipeda on January 19. In Panevezys, the sign denoting the location of the Jewish community's office inside a school building has repeatedly been vandalized and stolen, most recently on January 9. And in Joniskis, "Juden Raus" -- German for "Jews Out" -- was spraypainted on the plywood wall surrounding the town's disused synagogue on January 21.

[1](#)3. (C) As explicitly noted in the OSCE's Berlin Declaration, GOL officials must speak out strongly and immediately when acts of anti-Semitism or intolerance occur. Lithuania is slated to serve as OSCE chair in 2011. Counselor Saulius Jaskelevicius, the MFA official who monitors Jewish issues, told us the GOL was aware of the January incidents but had thus far chosen to remain silent. It did so, he said, in order not to allow the vandals, whom he speculated were "maybe even an organized group that travels around Lithuania trying to incite people against Jews," to achieve their goal of "trying to attract political attention."

[1](#)4. (U) Comment: The silence is in keeping with the GOL's history of failure to clearly and quickly speak out against anti-Semitism and in favor of the tolerance and human rights that Lithuania committed itself to as a member of the OSCE and other Western institutions. It also shows that the GOL does not understand how every instance of silence erodes its international standing. Last year, after the GOL's slow response to a skinhead march in Vilnius (ref A), Post reminded GOL officials at several levels on several occasions that they must condemn such events. In August 2008, top GOL officials were quick to condemn anti-Semitic vandalism in Vilnius and Panevezys (ref B). That progress appears to have been short-lived. End comment.
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